

The results of this study indicate that black Americans, especially young black males, are suspicious that genocide is the aim of family planning programs controlled by whites. Black women are more positively inclined to family planning. There is altogether an ambivalence created by the fear of genocide and a desire to use family planning methods. This dilemma will remain until the life circumstances of black Americans improve.

# Fears of Genocide Among Black Americans as Related to Age, Sex, and Region

## Introduction

In recent years there has been increasing concern in the black community that birth control (family planning) programs may be a current method of perpetrating black genocide.<sup>1-3</sup>

The United Nations Convention on Genocide has defined genocide as "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group."<sup>4</sup> Using this general definition, it is evident that fears of genocide among black Americans are firmly based on historical and contemporary reality. Black Americans have been subjected to centuries of brutalization which needs no documentation here. But more importantly, the pervasiveness of white racism in the United States continues to create the circumstances for both direct and indirect forms of black genocide.<sup>5</sup>

An example of such racism is the increasing number of punitive and compulsory sterilization proposals appearing throughout the country.<sup>6</sup> Although the stated intent of these proposals has usually been to "stem the tide of illegitimate births" or to "reduce the welfare rolls," further elaboration often reveals racist motivations which are all too clear.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, it should be pointed out that these proposals have not been limited to southern states.

The purpose of the study reported here was to determine the extent of genocide fears among a sample of black Americans and to explore the relationships of other variables (i.e., age, sex, and region) to such fears.

## Family Planning as a Form of Genocide?

In a previous study carried out in several black communities of Hartford, Connecticut, the degree of expressed genocide fears was striking. For instance, twenty-eight per cent agreed that "Encouraging blacks to use birth control is comparable to trying to eliminate this group from society."

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The present study investigated the extent of genocide fears among a much larger and regionally varied group of black Americans. More specifically the relationship of such fears, age, sex, and region of the country was also examined.

Previous research suggests that age is a factor relevant to the study of genocide fears. In the Hartford study mentioned above we found that young males were consistently more likely to believe that birth control programs are contrary to the welfare of black people.<sup>8</sup> Other research has shown that black youths tend to take more militant stands than older blacks.<sup>9</sup> If black militancy and fears of race genocide are related, one would expect that younger blacks would more often express fears of genocide.

A second area of interest concerns differences between the sexes on genocide fears. Two factors suggest that genocide fears may be expressed to a lesser extent by females. First, females have been found to be less militant than males.<sup>10</sup> And, secondly, females may be assumed to have more investment in the use of birth control methods and therefore would be less inclined to construe them in negative ways.

Finally, regional differences may affect fears of race genocide among black people. It is not clear, however, what the effect might be. First, historically overt acts of violence against black people (i.e., lynching, castration, etc.) have been more common in the South. One might expect, therefore, that southern blacks would have more tangible bases for genocide fear. On the other hand, a greater degree of black militancy has been found in the North.<sup>11</sup> If the previous hypothesis concerning the relationship between militancy and genocide fears is correct, then we would predict that northern blacks would express more fears of genocide.

Summary of null hypotheses:

- There is no difference in genocide fears between younger as compared to older black Americans.
- There is no difference in genocide fears between males as compared to females.
- There is no difference in genocide fears between northern blacks as compared to southern blacks.

## Method

### Sample

The sample consisted of 1,890 black Americans living in either Philadelphia, Pennsylvania or Charlotte, North Carolina. These cities were chosen for three reasons: 1) they are geographically diverse—i.e., north-south; 2) they both have large and socioeconomically diverse black populations; and 3) they are representative of the characteristics and problems of American urban centers in general.

The sampling procedure began with the identification of communities which, according to census data, were composed of at least 50 per cent blacks. Using U. S. Census Reports, each community was placed into one of two categories, based on the average income of its residents: low socioeconomic status (SES) and middle to high SES. Approximately SES-stratified samples were drawn by selecting two low SES and two middle-to-high SES communities within each city.

Next, households were chosen from street lists by means of a computerized random sampling procedure. In each selected household a female 15-44 years of age was contacted. Arrangements were made to interview her and her most significant male partner (usually her husband, but if she were single, divorced, or widowed, then her boyfriend). (Some of the index cases provided no male partner.)

### Interview Schedule

An interview schedule with both pre-coded and open-ended items was used. In addition to demographic information, there were questions concerning family planning methods and attitudes toward family planning programs. Among the several attitude items there were five which were considered to reflect upon fears of genocide—some more than others. (See Table 1) Implicit in each is the notion that birth control, family planning programs, or population control is related to the well-being of black people. The first item reflects the degree to which respondents distrust the involvement of whites in black family planning, while the remaining four items are more directly concerned with population reduction.

### Procedure

When male partners were available, a male-female interviewing team entered the home together. The matched male-female interviews were conducted simultaneously in different parts of the residence of the respondents. The interviewers were of the same sex as the respondents.

### Results

Table 1 provides a general overview of the findings. The table presents the per cent agreement on the five genocide items by age, sex, and region. We are immediately struck by the extent of genocide fears in this sample. Item 3 ("As blacks become militant, there will be an attempt to reduce the black population.") received the greatest over-all agreement and was affirmed by 62.6% of the sample. However, the statement (item 5) which most specifically implicates birth control programming as a genocidal plot received the smallest percentage of agreement (39.1%).

**Table 1—Per cent Agreement with Statements Related to Genocide by Region, Sex, and Age\***

Item	North				South				Total Sample (N-1877)
	Male		Female		Male		Female		
	Under 28 (N-325)	28 + (N-307)	Under 28 (N-443)	28 + (N-369)	Under 28 (N-62)	28 + (N-71)	Under 28 (N-71)	28 + (N-112)	
1. Birth control clinics in black neighborhoods should be operated by blacks.	66.5	59.3	55.5	56.6	66.1	53.5	45.1	51.8	58.2
2. As the need for cheap labor goes down, there will be an effort to reduce the number of blacks.	56.5	45.2	61.1	53.4	42.6	47.9	40.8	37.8	51.1
3. As blacks become more militant, there will be an effort to decrease the black population.	67.4	59.4	67.2	62.3	60.7	56.3	54.9	56.9	62.6
4. The survival of black people depends on in-creasing the number of black births.	61.7	53.9	50.7	51.4	45.2	54.9	47.9	53.6	53.3
5. Birth control pro-grams are a plot to eliminate blacks.	55.9	36.2	42.0	39.9	22.6	33.8	19.7	22.3	39.1

\*The age split was based on the closest approximation to the median of the sample as a whole.

**Table 2—Per cent Agreement and Chi-Square Values for Five Statements Related to Genocide By Region, Sex, and Age**

Independent variable	Number	Items				
		1	2	3	4	5
Age						
Under 28	894	59.4	56.6	65.8	54.1	43.8
28 +	856	56.6	47.9	60.0	52.8	35.7
( $\chi^2$ )		(1.26)	(12.81)†	(6.19)†	(.24)	(11.63)†
Sex						
Male	871	62.3	47.7	61.7	56.1	41.3
Female	1005	54.7	54.1	63.4	50.8*	37.2
( $\chi^2$ )		(10.82)†	(7.39)†	(.51)	(4.99)	(2.99)
Region						
North	1532	59.2	53.3	63.7	53.8	42.5
South	345	53.9	41.4	57.5	51.0	24.1
( $\chi^2$ )		(3.03)	(15.34)†	(4.40)*	(.76)	(39.29)†

\* $p < .05$

† $p < .01$

‡ $p < .001$

Our first attempt to test the major hypotheses was carried out by means of chi-square analyses. Table 2 presents the per cent agreement and chi-square values for the three independent variables—i.e., age, sex, and region—for each of the five genocide items. Significant differences were found on items 2, 3, and 5 for age; items 1, 2, and 4 for sex; and items 2, 3, and 5 for region. Thus age, sex, and region are clearly related to fears of race genocide.

The second step in the data analysis was to determine the effect of each independent variable separately while controlling for the other two. Table 3 presents the per cent agreement on the five items according to age of respondent when sex and region are controlled. Significant differences remain for the same three items. On item 2 the young respondents (both male and female) from the North expressed significantly more agreement with the statement than did the older respondents. On items 3 and 5 age is a significant factor only among the northern males, with young respondents expressing more agreement. It is noteworthy that the relationship between the age groups in the southern sample is opposite of that in the northern sample. That is, the older southerners agree more often than the younger. This switch suggests that genocide fears in the North may be mainly a function of black militancy whereas in the South such fears may reflect upon overt genocidal acts, which older blacks are likely to have experienced more directly.

Focusing now on the main effect of sex, Table 4 presents the per cent agreement on the five items by sex with age and region controlled. Having removed the effects of the latter two variables, not only do items 1, 2, and 4 show significant differences by sex, but item 5 also shows such an effect. The significant differences are again found primarily in the northern sample. In each case, excepting item 2, the significant difference indicates greater agreement among the males. It is difficult to explain why females in the north should agree more with item 2 (which focuses on cheap labor) than do northern males.

Finally, Table 5 presents the per cent agreement on the five items by region, with age and sex controlled. Items 2 and 5 continue to show some significant differences by

**Table 3—Per cent Agreement with Genocide Items By Age, Controlling Region and Sex**

Item	Control variables		Age				$\chi^2$
	Region	Sex	Under 28		28 +		
			N	%	N	%	
1	North	Male	325	66.5	307	59.3	3.19
		Female	443	55.5	369	56.6	.06
	South	Male	62	66.1	71	53.5	1.69
		Female	71	45.1	112	51.8	.54
2	North	Male	322	56.5	310	45.2	7.71†
		Female	437	61.1	367	53.4	4.53*
	South	Male	61	42.6	71	47.9	.19
		Female	71	40.8	111	37.8	.06
3	North	Male	325	67.4	310	59.4	4.07*
		Female	439	67.2	369	62.3	1.88
	South	Male	61	60.7	71	56.3	.11
		Female	71	54.9	109	56.9	.01
4	North	Male	326	61.7	310	53.9	3.64
		Female	440	50.7	368	51.4	.01
	South	Male	62	45.2	71	54.9	.90
		Female	71	47.9	112	53.9	.36
5	North	Male	320	55.9	304	36.2	23.68‡
		Female	441	42.0	368	39.9	.26
	South	Male	62	22.6	71	33.8	1.53
		Female	71	19.7	112	22.3	.05

\* $p < .05$

† $p < .01$

‡ $p < .001$

**Table 4—Per cent Agreement with Genocide Items By Sex, Controlling Age and Region**

Item	Control variables		Sex				$\chi^2$
	Region	Age	Male		Female		
			N	%	N	%	
1	North	Under 28	325	66.5	443	55.5	8.90†
		28	307	59.3	369	56.6	.38
	South	Under 28	62	66.1	71	45.1	5.11*
		28	71	53.5	112	51.8	.01
2	North	Under 28	322	56.5	437	61.1	1.42
		28	310	45.2	367	53.4	4.25
	South	Under 28	61	42.6	71	40.8	.00
		28	71	47.9	111	37.8	1.41
3	North	Under 28	325	67.4	439	67.2	.00
		28	310	59.4	369	62.3	.51
	South	Under 28	61	60.7	71	54.9	.24
		28	71	56.3	109	56.9	.01
4	North	Under 28	326	61.7	440	50.7	8.69‡
		28	310	53.9	368	51.4	.33
	South	Under 28	62	45.2	71	47.9	.02
		28	71	54.9	112	53.6	.00
5	North	Under 28	320	55.9	441	42.0	13.98‡
		28	304	36.2	368	39.9	.84
	South	Under 28	62	22.6	71	19.7	.04
		28	71	33.8	112	22.3	2.37

\* $p < .05$

† $p < .01$

‡ $p < .001$

region. On item 2 the significant findings are limited to the female groups, suggesting some support for the interpretation of low perceived opportunity among northern black females. On item 5 northern respondents consistently express more agreement and significant effect of region is retained for all comparisons except that between the older males. On item 4 a significant difference between the younger males in the two regions emerged after controlling age and sex. Young males from the North were more inclined to agree that "The survival of black people depends on increasing the number of black births." This result may reflect differences in perception of relative deprivation. In the South, young black males may be experiencing increasing opportunity in comparison to their parents, whereas northern black males may be experiencing more relative deprivation and, therefore, increased alienation.<sup>12</sup>

#### *Education and Fears of Genocide*

Is it possible that the relationships found between the independent variables and genocide fears are attributable to other factors such as socioeconomic status (SES)? Level of educational attainment was chosen as an SES control for two reasons: first, it is a good single index of social class<sup>13</sup> and second, educational attainment also suggests degree of access to information relevant to the development of attitudes toward family planning or racial genocide.

First, Table 6 presents the per cent agreement on the five genocide items by education level. The respondents with lower educational attainment more often agreed with the genocide items. The differences reached statistical significance on items 1, 4, and 5.

Next, educational attainment was used as a control variable for the primary independent variables. Table 7 pre-

**Table 5—Per cent Agreement with Genocide Items By Region, Controlling Sex and Age**

Item	Control variables		Region				$\chi^2$
	Sex	Age	North		South		
			N	%	N	%	
1	Male	Under 28	325	66.5	62	66.1	.01
		28	307	59.3	71	53.5	.57
	Female	Under 28	443	55.5	71	45.1	2.29
		28	369	56.6	112	51.0	.63
2	Male	Under 28	322	56.5	61	42.6	3.45
		28	310	45.2	71	47.9	.08
	Female	Under 28	437	61.1	71	40.8	9.49†
		28	367	53.4	111	37.8	7.65†
3	Male	Under 28	325	67.4	61	60.7	.76
		28	310	59.4	71	56.3	.11
	Female	Under 28	439	67.2	71	54.9	3.55
		28	369	62.3	109	56.9	.83
4	Male	Under 28	326	61.7	62	45.2	5.20*
		28	310	53.9	71	54.9	.00
	Female	Under 28	440	50.7	71	47.9	.10
		28	368	51.4	112	53.6	.09
5	Male	Under 28	320	55.9	62	22.6	21.80‡
		28	304	36.2	71	33.8	.06
	Female	Under 28	441	42.0	71	19.7	11.80‡
		28	368	39.9	112	22.3	10.85‡

\* $p < .05$

† $p < .01$

‡ $p < .001$

sents the per cent agreement by age, controlling education. Clearly, the effects of age are not removed by controlling education. Where there are significant differences found, in each it is the younger group which shows the greatest degree of agreement.

Table 8 presents the per cent agreement by sex, controlling education. Items 1, 2, and 4 which showed significant differences when not controlled, continue to show significant differences; but in each case, this is true for only one of the educational levels. Inspection of the percentages for item 1 reveals very similar agreement percentages for all groups except the females with higher educational attainment. This may simply reflect the greater degree of conservatism in upper-status females. The pattern found on item 2 lends some support to the previous interpretation that the occupational opportunities of women may be perceived by them as decreasing. Notice that it is only the lower status females who differ significantly from the males. This may reflect the fact that the item refers only to lower status occupations.

Finally, with education controlled, Table 9 presents the per cent agreement by region. The same three items (2, 3, and 5) continue to show significant regional differences.

## Conclusions and Implications

The findings of the present study indicate that genocidal fears are widely held in the black population and that the factors of age, sex, region and educational level are related to the prevalence of these fears. On all items the younger group expressed more fear than the older group, and the northern group expressed more fear than the southern group. On all but item 2 the males expressed more fear than the females. And those with less education expressed greater fear than those who had received more education. It is of considerable significance that on 4 of the 5 items more than 50% of all people interviewed expressed agreement. Although the degree of expressed fear was lower when "birth control" as a genocidal technique was the specific issue, that 39% of the entire sample believed that "birth control programs are a plot to eliminate blacks" is ample basis for distress.

These results indicate that black Americans have a great deal of fear and distrust of white Americans. However, it is not apparent that black Americans are against family planning in particular. On the contrary, there is considerable evidence that black women (if not black men) are even more positively inclined toward family planning than white women<sup>14</sup> and that fertility differentials by race are declining.<sup>15</sup> It has been suggested by Jaffe that the differences between the races are more a function of access to effective family planning instruction than to differences in ideal family size.<sup>16</sup>

The lower status respondents were more likely to express genocide fears than were those of higher status. Those who have been victimized in the past are likely to be the most sensitive to perpetration of new crimes. The young, lower status, northern black male (the most expressive of genocide fears) has every reason to wonder why white America is pushing family planning in the black community at the same time that it fails to push for equity in education and in occupational opportunity.

What then are the implications of the findings reported here? We suggest that black Americans over time have been forced into a stance of suspicion with regard to white Americans and family planning programs are simply a new context

**Table 6—Per cent Agreement and Chi-Square Values for the Five Statements Related to Genocide By Education Level\***

Education level	N	Items				
		1	2	3	4	5
Less than H. S. graduate	830	61.0	53.2	63.9	61.7	45.4
H.S. graduate	1047	56.1	49.4	61.5	46.6	34.0
( $\chi^2$ )		(4.37) <sup>†</sup>	(2.49)	(1.04)	(41.68) <sup>‡</sup>	(24.88) <sup>‡</sup>

\*This dichotomy of education is based on the closest point in the median of the entire sample

† $p < .05$

‡ $p < .001$

**Table 7—Per cent Agreement by Age on the Genocide Items, Controlling Education Level**

Item	Education level	Age				$\chi^2$
		Under 28		28 +		
1	Less than H.S. grad.	379	59.1	382	62.3	.69
	H.S. grad.	522	59.6	478	52.1	5.38*
2	Less than H.S. grad.	375	59.2	382	50.8	5.08*
	H.S. grad.	516	54.7	478	45.6	7.76†
3	Less than H.S. grad.	376	68.9	383	60.6	5.38*
	H.S. grad.	520	63.7	477	59.5	1.61
4	Less than H.S. grad.	378	60.8	383	62.1	.09
	H.S. grad.	521	49.1	479	45.3	1.32
5	Less than H.S. grad.	379	48.8	383	43.9	1.68
	H.S. grad.	515	40.2	473	29.2	12.69‡

\* $p < .05$

† $p < .01$

‡ $p < .001$

**Table 8—Per cent Agreement by Sex on the Genocide Items, Controlling Education Level**

Item	Education level	Sex				$\chi^2$
		Male		Female		
		N	%	N	%	
1	Less than H.S. grad.	404	62.1	425	60.0	.31
	H.S. grad.	467	62.5	580	50.9	13.82†
2	Less than H.S. grad.	404	49.5	422	56.9	4.21*
	H.S. grad.	468	46.2	574	52.1	3.40
3	Less than H.S. grad.	406	60.6	422	67.3	3.76
	H.S. grad.	469	62.7	576	60.6	.40
4	Less than H.S. grad.	406	65.3	423	58.4	3.86*
	H.S. grad.	469	48.2	578	45.3	.74
5	Less than H.S. grad.	403	46.9	426	44.1	.53
	H.S. grad.	460	36.3	576	32.1	1.82

\* $p < .05$

† $p < .01$

**Table 9—Per cent Agreement by Region on the Genocide Items, Controlling for Level of Education**

Item	Education level	Region				$\chi^2$
		North		South		
		N	%	N	%	
1	Less than H. S. grad.	734	60.9	96	61.5	.00
	H. S. grad. +	798	57.6	249	51.0	3.13
2	Less than H. S. grad.	732	55.3	95	36.8	10.81†
	H. S. grad. +	794	51.4	248	43.1	4.81*
3	Less than H. S. grad.	734	65.3	95	53.7	4.40*
	H. S. grad. +	799	62.3	246	58.9	.77
4	Less than H. S. grad.	734	61.4	96	63.5	.08
	H. S. grad. +	798	46.7	249	46.2	.01
5	Less than H. S. grad.	734	46.9	96	34.4	4.85*
	H. S. grad. +	787	38.4	249	20.1	27.41‡

\* $p < .05$

† $p < .01$

‡ $p < .001$

of that suspicion. It is noteworthy that the greatest degree of agreement is found where the issue of black control of family planning (as against white control) is at issue. The potential ambivalence created by the fear of genocide and the desire to use family planning methods is clear. It is thus evident, that genocide fears of black Americans are continuing to create barriers to the effective use of family planning methods. We conclude that this dilemma will remain unresolved until the life circumstances of black Americans improve.

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